

Riverstone Country Women's Association

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Riverstone C.W.A. came into being on 24th August 1933 when fifty ladies attended a meeting in the Masonic Hall. Mrs. Ida Steer was elected as President, Mrs. Ada Smith as Secretary and Mrs. Josie East as Treasurer.

One of the branch's first activities was to press for the establishment of a Baby Health Centre and the first Clinic opened on 1st August 1934 in a small room adjacent to the Riverstone Railway Station. The first annual meeting held on 29th November 1934 showed that 157 babies had received treatment at the Health Centre and 23 babies were visited at home from August 1st to November 28th.

In 1934 action by the C.W.A. ladies resulted in Riverstone residents receiving their first daily postal deliveries. In 1935 a public meeting was called to form a younger set and later that year the first donation of five pounds was made to Windsor Hospital to maintain a bed. This contribution has continued on a yearly basis.

Each meeting brought forward new ideas and ways of making money for the association. Flower Shows and Exhibitions of Old Treasures were popular as were Cooking Competitions. Youngsters looked forward to the Fancy Dress Ball which was held annually at the Masonic Hall during the forties and fifties. Monthly Card Afternoons and Street Stalls have continued over the years.

In more recent years the C.W.A. has made an annual donation to the local school's library and school children have enjoyed competing in the Poster / Project Competitions run statewide by the C.W.A. in conjunction with their International Day. Children have benefited from this by studying a country they may not otherwise have been introduced to at school and Riverstone children have particularly enjoyed being invited to the International Day Party to receive their prizes.

In 1943 the block of land on the corner of Market and Pitt Streets was purchased for eighty pounds and the present Baby Health Centre and C.W.A. Meeting Rooms was duly erected, with the Foundation Stone being laid on 28th June 1952. It is interesting to record that in 1949 council rates were three pounds, five shillings and sixpence and in 1983 they were \$235.

During the war years Riverstone, like other branches of the C.W.A., raised funds to buy wool and knit socks for the local men serving in World War II. Food parcels were organised and sent to the troops and, in the early years after the war, these parcels were redirected to families in Britain.

On 9th January 1945 a special meeting of the executive was called in response to an appeal from the Riverstone District Bushfire Brigade for support of victims of recent fires in the district. A street stall was held and a profit of twelve pounds was donated to the funds. In 1954 the branch celebrated its 21st birthday and among other donations to the Baby Health Centre was a doormat from Mr. Bob Steer, son of the founding president, Mrs. Ida Steer.

At the 50th birthday celebrations held at the Riverstone RSL Club in 1983, Mr. Bob Steer presented his mother's life membership badge to the branch, together with the gong and gavel and a cheque for a \$100 to start a fund to cover the cost of minor repairs needed at the Baby Health Centre. One hundred and fifty-seven ladies and gents were welcomed to this Golden Anniversary Celebration by President Mrs. Phyllis Dege. Special guests included Blacktown's Deputy Mayor, Mr. Charlie Bali and Mrs. M. Commons, State President of the C.W.A. who, as guest speaker, enlightened everyone to the work being done by C.W.A. throughout the state. Other official guests included h. Judy Cadman, wife of the Federal Member for Mitchell, Alan Cadman; Group President Mrs. Gwen Steward and two foundation members, Mrs. Alice Marnock and Mrs. Cecilia Bambridge. These two ladies cut the cake which was made by former member, Mrs. Margaret Crouch. Another 1933 member, Mrs. Dot Vaughan, thanked Mrs. Commons and made a presentation on behalf of Riverstone members. A further presentation was made to Sister Betty Simmons who was retiring after ten years as Baby Health Sister and a long service badge was received by Mrs. Daphne Hession for twenty years of continuous service. Mrs. Hession also accepted a badge on behalf of her sister-in-law, Miss Frances Hession.

During the seventies and eighties the C.W. A, had a very active Coach Organiser Mrs. Maisie Darling and members from Riverstone and surrounding branches enjoyed some memorable trips. Day Trips went to venues such as the Roger Bush Christmas Carols at the Opera House, Tulip Time in Bowral, cruising the Nepean River on the paddle cruiser, the *Nepean Belle*. Overlander Trips included visiting Melbourne for the Cup, exploring Broken Hill, Tasmania, relaxing at Bundanoon, celebrating Bounty Day, and the Bicentenary on Norfolk Island, marvelling at the delights of Queensland's Expo.

In 1997 Riverstone C.W.A. is affected much the same as other similar organisations. The changing lifestyle has meant most women who would have made up the membership in the past are now holding down full-time jobs. Still, a small core of hardworking members, with their Street Stalls, Card Afternoons, Cooking Competitions and study of other countries is maintaining the Baby Health Centre and keeping alive the C.W.A. Motto:

*"Honour to God
Loyalty to the Throne,
Service lo the country,
Through country women,
For country women,
By country women. "*